

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An electronic scale integrally formed within a piece of office equipment, comprising:

a platform for supporting an item; and

a weighing unit mounted at least partially within a housing of said piece of office equipment, said weighing unit including:

at least one support member in contact with said platform, at least a portion of said platform being exposed along an exterior surface of said housing, and

a force transducer mounted within said housing at a position adjacent said support member, said support member impinging upon said force transducer when said item is placed on said platform to cause said force transducer to output a weight signal indicative of a weight of said item.

2. The electronic scale of claim 1, wherein said weighing unit includes a pivot mount fixed to an interior surface of said housing, said support member having a first end rotatably connected to said pivot mount and a second end in contact with a bottom surface of said platform, said force transducer outputting said weight signal when said support member impinges upon said force transducer under weight of said item on said platform.

3. The electronic scale of claim 2, wherein said housing of said piece of office equipment includes a base, and wherein said pivot mount is fixed to an interior surface of said base and

the second end of said support member is connected to said platform through a slot in said base.

4. The electronic scale of claim 1, wherein said piece of office equipment is one selected from the group consisting of a flat-panel display unit, a CRT monitor, a CPU unit, and a printer.

5. The electronic scale of claim 1, wherein said piece of office equipment is a CRT monitor having a display screen, and wherein said weighing unit includes two support members and two pivot mounts fixed to an interior surface of said housing, each of said support members having a first end rotatably connected to a respective one of said pivot mounts and a second end connected to one of two opposing sides of said platform, said force transducer outputting said weight signal when said support members move under weight of said item on said platform.

6. The electronic scale of claim 5, wherein the second end of said two support members are rotatably connected to respective ones of said pivot mounts to allow said platform to rotate into a level position.

7. The electronic scale of claim 5, wherein said two support members include a third support member, disposed beneath said platform, for connecting said two support arms, said third support member impinging upon said force transducer under weight of said item on said platform.

8. The electronic scale of claim 1, wherein said support member is removably connected to said platform, to thereby allow at least a second platform of different dimensions to be connected to said support member.

9. The electronic scale of claim 1, further comprising:
a display mounted to the housing of said piece of office equipment; and

signal lines for conveying said weight signal to said display so that said display displays the weight of said item.

10. The electronic scale of claim 1, wherein said platform forms a bottom surface of a container having side walls connected to said platform for holding said item.

11. The electronic scale of claim 1, wherein said piece of office equipment is a printer having a discharge area for holding paper after printing, said platform located adjacent said discharge area, and

wherein said weighing unit is within said printer and includes a pivot mount fixed to an interior surface of said area, said support member having a first end rotatably connected to said pivot mount and a second end in contact with a bottom surface of said platform, said force transducer outputting said weight signal when said support member impinges upon said force transducer under weight of said item on said platform.

12. The electronic scale of claim 1, wherein said piece of office equipment is a printer having a discharge area for holding paper after printing,

wherein said weighing unit is within said printer and includes a pivot mount fixed to an interior surface of said area, said support member having a first end rotatably connected to said pivot mount and a second end in contact with a bottom surface of said platform, and

wherein said platform is at least substantially co-extensive with said discharge area, so that when said paper is discharged from said printer said paper is in a position to be weighed while resting in said discharge area, said force transducer outputting said weight signal when said support member impinges upon said force transducer under weight of said item on said platform.

13. An electronic scale integrally formed within a housing of a piece of office equipment, comprising:

a platform for supporting an item;

a weighing unit mounted at least partially within a housing of said piece of office equipment, said weighing unit including:

a force transducer mounted within said housing at a position underneath said platform, and

two support members for supporting said platform, each of said two support members having a first end connected to said platform and a second end mounted to an interior of said housing, said support members deflecting to allow said

platform to impinge upon said force transducer when said item is placed on said platform, said force transducer outputting weight signals corresponding to a weight of said item.

14. The electronic scale of claim 13, further comprising:
two bias springs mounted on respective ones of said two support members, said bias springs compressing to allow said platform to impinge upon said force transducer when said item is placed on said platform.

15. The electronic scale of claim 13, wherein said piece of office equipment is one selected from the group consisting of a printer and a CRT unit.

16. A system for computing a postal or carrier rate, comprising:

a piece of office equipment;

an electronic scale integrally formed within a housing of said piece of office equipment, said electronic scale including:

- (a) a platform for supporting an item; and
- (b) a weighing unit mounted at least partially within the housing of said piece of office equipment, said weighing unit including:

(i) at least one support member in contact with said platform, at least a portion of said platform being exposed along an exterior surface of said housing, and

(ii) a force transducer mounted within said housing at a position adjacent said support member, said support member impinging upon said force transducer when said item is placed on said platform to cause said force transducer to output a weight signal indicative of a weight of said item; and

a processor for computing a postal or carrier rate for said item based on said weight signal.

17. The system of claim 16, further comprising:

a printer for printing one of a label or envelope bearing a mark indicative of said postal or carrier rate.

18. A method for computing a postal or carrier rate, comprising:

integrating an electronic scale into a housing of a piece of office equipment;

weighing an item on said electronic scale to derive a weight signal;

conveying a weight signal to a processor;

entering at least one parameter relating to a method of delivering said item;

computing a postal or carrier rate based on said weight signal and said at least one parameter.

19. The method of claim 18, further comprising:
printing one of a label or envelope bearing a mark indicative of said postal or carrier rate.

20. The method of claim 18, wherein said computing step is performed in accordance with a computer program which causes a computer display to generate at least one display screen for allowing a user to enter said at least one parameter upon request, said computer further causing said computer display to display a weight of said item and said postal or carrier rate.

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